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Prophetic Realism: Beyond Militarism and Pacifism in an Age of Terror, by Ronald H. Stone

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hearken to it or reject it as they pleased, or as it suited their interest, passions, principles, or humors” (193). Forster concludes, following Locke, that “Divine authority is probably the only hope for social and political solidarity” (193).

I suspect that many of us are sympathetic with Locke and Forster’s contention that moral consensus at some level of generality is necessary for a stable political order. Still, I suspect, many will part ways with them in their effort to build “moral consensus around a set of shared beliefs about God that are very certain” (219). Absent many of the presuppositions about biblical authority and natural theology that Locke and his audience largely held in common, it is not obvious that, practically speaking, such a moral consensus is possible today in explicitly theological terms. Nor is it clear from a theoretical perspective what role such a substantive consensus, including explicit claims about God, were it to be reached, should play in the context of establishing a political constitution for a pluralist society. The prepolitical moral consensus on which the political order would rest on this account, including its theological content, would be the basis of legitimate political authority, and any challenge to the terms of this prepolitical moral consensus would represent a threat to this authority. Even Locke’s epistemology of limits will not preclude disagreement once and for all on those moral and religious issues deemed highly certain (one need only consider our current political debates about global warming to see a current example of very certain beliefs retaining their ability to create political and social unrest); to turn such disagreements into challenges to political authority itself seems an unlikely strategy for diffusing the political pressures generated by moral and religious pluralism in the first place. Before concluding that political authority in modern pluralist societies can be legitimized only in terms of an establishment of religion, I think there are alternatives worthy of our consideration. That being said, I wholeheartedly recommend Forster’s very fine work for its valuable contributions to Lockean scholarship and for its thoughtful and challenging contributions to contemporary political theory.

BRETT WILMOT, *Villanova University*.

STONE, RONALD H. *Prophetic Realism: Beyond Militarism and Pacifism in an Age of Terror*. New York: T & T Clark International, 2005. xiv+192 pp. \$27.95 (cloth).

There have been too few theological voices who have confronted current U.S. foreign policy issues with sustained treatments of the complexities of international politics. Ronald Stone’s *Prophetic Realism* helps to redress this lacuna in profound ways. Integrating previous writings on Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, and Christian realism, Stone articulates a theological and ethical critique of U.S. foreign policy. He argues that a prophetic realism, informed by biblical sources, a properly conceived anthropology, and appreciation for historical ambiguity, more adequately addresses issues of justice and international politics than the present administration’s realpolitik strategies. The book consists of an excursus into the development of realism and reflections on the nature of power (chaps. 1–6), a realist critique of just peacemaking and pacifism (chaps. 7–9), and the application of realist principles to contemporary debates on human rights, terrorism, and militarism (chaps. 10–12).

Stone defines prophetic realism as a “practical philosophy of international relations” (xiii) that “contains a large amount of normative theory drawn both

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from Scripture and the history of moral philosophy" (xiii). Prophetic realism promotes the goals of peace and justice "while taking account from both theological and political perspectives of the forces that resist those goals" (48). Consequently, prophetic realism "is situated between the Bush administration's realpolitik and just peacemaking's more visionary or transformative perspective on foreign policy" (119). One of the significant strengths of Stone's book is his attention to realism's historical situatedness. In the opening chapters of the book, Stone presents an account of realism from its biblical sources, its Greco-Roman expressions, its divergent forms in Augustine, Calvin, and Machiavelli, and its American exponents in Niebuhr, Tillich, and Hans Morgenthau. He deftly distinguishes Hobbesian and Machiavellian realism from his preferred Niebuhrian and Tillichian prophetic realism, and he supplements close textual readings with anecdotal accounts (typically, recounted conversations with Niebuhr). Yet there are some conceptual problems. At one point, he seemingly conflates these different versions of realism, arguing that "classical realism [is] called in this book prophetic realism" (115), even as he had earlier contended that Roger Spegele's evaluative realism "is similar in purpose to the thesis of this book in revising classical realism" (48).

Stone's synthetic thinking—illustrated in succinct summaries of Stanley Hoffmann (50–52) and contemporary American debates regarding human rights (141–51)—reflects his typically critical and thorough analysis. Though, at times, the overall analysis is framed too conspicuously in the service of promoting the Morgenthau-Niebuhr-Tillich school, Stone does marshal criticisms against these thinkers (e.g., Morgenthau's claim about personal responsibility for foreign policy "ignores a significant amount of evidence" [33]). These critiques can suffer from a certain degree of datedness (as several chapters were published previously in the 1970s and 1980s); the reader sometimes feels as if the Vietnam conflict had just concluded. Nonetheless, Stone does hook up these historical considerations with contemporary debates regarding the pursuit of the war on terror. Retrieving the spirit of Amos present throughout the book, Stone boldly states: "The war in Iraq was not justified by defense against terrorism directed against the United States" (157). Stone proposes that rigorous attention to religious sources, an examination of the ontology of power, and prophetic resistance from churches can galvanize more just policies. He points to resonances between prophetic realism and Glen Stassen's just peacemaking, but he gainsays just peacemaking alone as an effective strategy "because it does not seem persuasive enough to guide and limit the policy of the solitary superpower" (109). Moreover, Stone polemically refutes Stanley Hauerwas's pacifist criticisms of Niebuhr. These constructive engagements—drawing on Stone's most recent writings—help distinguish subtle presuppositions in these theological and ethical positions (even if claims such as "liberation theologies and feminist perspectives have eroded the prophetic realist paradigms" [57] and prophetic realism "approves only of prudential use of violence" [159] are never fully clarified). Notably absent is just war theory; dialogue with representatives such as Jean Bethke Elshtain (*Just War against Terror* [New York: Basic, 2003], which also draws on Niebuhr and Tillich but for different conclusions) would have been fruitful.

In sum, Stone's interdisciplinary book makes an important contribution to current debates in theological ethics and international politics. Despite some minor shortcomings, Stone's project helps illuminate the challenges that

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American policies have obviated or neglected and would benefit specialists as well as upper-level undergraduate and graduate students.

JONATHAN ROTHCHILD, *Loyola Marymount University*.

BARRERA, ALBINO. *Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics*. New Studies in Christian Ethics. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. xvii+248 pp. \$75.00 (cloth).

It is refreshing to find a contribution to theological economic ethics that reflects a strong understanding of the utility and limits of economic theory in interpreting today's global economy. Albino Barrera's monograph is one of those rare works in theological economic ethics that passes this test of economic seriousness. That he likewise displays close familiarity with biblical scholarship and the Roman Catholic social tradition makes this volume a substantive contribution to theological ethical debates surrounding contemporary political economy.

The object of Barrera's reflections is pecuniary externality, that is, a third-party effect of economic transactions that is mediated by market prices. Examples of pecuniary externalities include a farmer's loss of income due to larger worldwide harvests and the loss of housing quality for the family priced out of a gentrifying neighborhood. Barrera demonstrates how pecuniary externalities redistribute economic goods from persons who are already disadvantaged toward the more advantaged. He is specifically concerned with pecuniary externalities that entail the loss of a minimum threshold level of economic goods necessary to ensure a person's capacity to achieve the full human good. Below this threshold, persons are compelled to forgo some goods essential to human flourishing for the sake of others even more essential. Barrera presents a clear case for the moral claims of those who suffer a loss of essential economic goods through the collective activity of the market and a clear exposition of Christian warrants to redress such losses and restore such persons to full socioeconomic participation.

Barrera's focus on losses rather than absolute economic deprivation has advantages and disadvantages. Since losses are much more salient and observable than ongoing deprivation, this focus provides motivation for redress and simplifies the thorny problem of identifying relationships of responsibility between those who suffer hardship and those who benefit from particular market structures and rules. Barrera's focus on losses also facilitates his identification of biblical warrants for socioeconomic restoration. On the other hand, Barrera's focus biases the result of any redress toward some identifiable status quo ante, which may or may not ensure the economic rights that he considers minimally necessary. Likewise, he does not address the question of restoration for that significant share of the world's population that has never possessed all of the goods he identifies as economic rights.

Barrera's choice of sources for theological warrants—the Bible and the Roman Catholic tradition—invokes a familiar problem for theological ethics. While these warrants may appeal to a broad spectrum of Christian and Jewish communities, Barrera clearly intends them to influence pluralistic national and international politics, not just religious individuals and communities. This is evident in Barrera's application of his restoration ethic to the question of national agricultural subsidies. Barrera argues that "rights language arguably pro-